

HOUSEHOLD SIN AND SORROW

NO. 3473

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1915
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1870

*“And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety and hath taken away thy blessing.”
Genesis 27:35*

THERE are some households where all are saved—how happy they should be!—where every son and every daughter, father, and mother are all believers—a church in the house, a church of which the whole of the house is comprised. It is such an unspeakable blessing that those who enjoy it ought never cease to praise God for it day and night.

But there are very many other households that have a share of this blessing, but the blessing is not complete. Like Noah with his household in the ark—Shem, Japheth, and perhaps some of the rest, their wives, believers and saved, but Ham profane and wicked. And here was the family of Isaac, not a very large one—but two boys—and here were father and mother and one son, but there was also one unregenerate, one of the flesh, one carnal-minded and minding earthly things.

And in this case this son, Esau, appears to have been a bold, manly, outspoken fellow who did not keep his irreligion to himself and made no sort of pretense about it. He despised the birthright. The great blessing which God had promised to the seed of Abraham he thought to be—well, a matter that did not concern him. For he received his pottage and enjoyed it. He was satisfied, for he could put on his goodly garments and disport himself as men of his time did—he was perfectly satisfied.

He had not any particular concern about spiritual things—did not want them. And on one occasion he was so profane that he showed the little esteem he had for what his father, and mother, and brother valued beyond life itself, by offering to sell this birthright that they thought so much of, for just a savory meal. He was a profane person, so the apostle tells us, and I suppose that action to have been one piece of his profanity.

He did it out of profane bravado as well as out of a careless disregard for it. He would, to show his profanity, give it up for a mere basin of lentils, and have become a source of great grief to his father and mother by his marriages, for he married a race that had been cursed of God, namely, the Hittites. This, we are told in the chapter preceding the text, was a great grief of mind both to Rebekah and to Isaac. They desired to have no connection with the heathen nations among whom they dwelt, for they were not merely worshippers of idols, but these nations were the most polluted in character. They had committed crimes that are not mentionable.

You remember how it was that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The sins for which those cities were destroyed were common enough in the land and Isaac did not wish, therefore, to cultivate any acquaintance with the people. He desired to keep his family altogether apart, but where there were two marriages you may readily imagine there was a good deal of connection.

There was much sorrow caused to the people at home, because there would be brought home to the tent, persons whose language would shock the piety of the household. There would be seen there sometimes reunions and gatherings that must have made Isaac's heart and Rebekah's heart very heavy indeed. Here was a household with all that it wanted of temporals, with the blessing of God upon it, but there was one son in it that caused a world of trial and trouble.

I wish sometimes young men who are, as we say, sowing their wild oats, would remember something of the sorrow they caused to others, even if they did not think about the ultimate trials which

they will be sure to bring upon themselves. If they knew how often the father's nights are sleepless and the mother's cheeks are wet with sorrow, they might at least, perhaps, not be quite so bold in sin and open in it as they now are.

Now the worst of it was that the presence of this Esau in the house was the occasion of leading all the others into a piece of business most discreditable to them all—and not to be defended for a single moment. Even one person in a household may put all the rest into a wrong position. There may be but one who does not fear God, and yet that one may eat, as does a canker, into the very vitals of the peace of the family and the character of all the house, though they may be godly persons, may be seriously deteriorated through having perpetually to come into contact with that one. And this was the case with that otherwise holy family—the presence of Esau became the occasion of much wrongdoing.

I shall briefly attempt at this time, first, to *show you the sin into which the godly members of that household fell*. I will show you *how they were recovered from it*. I will mark to you also *some of the afflictions which they had to suffer as the result of it*, and then just a word about *that ungodly son who had not the blessing*.

Well then, first, there were—

I. THREE GODLY PERSONS WHO FELL INTO SIN.

They were God-fearing persons in the household—believers in the covenant, expecters of the blessing, attaching value to spiritual things, as Esau did not. All these three fell into sin. Their sin consisted, first of all, *in a want of confidence in one another*. It is a very bad thing in a family when there is no confidence between the husband and the wife, between the children and the parents.

Now Isaac wished to give Esau a blessing. He did not tell his wife, but he arranged very craftily that Esau should prepare a little banquet for him—and then on that occasion, when they were all alone, he would give him the blessing. The usual way, and the proper way, would have been for the parent, when he expected to die, to have in the whole family and pronounce the blessing before them all, just as Jacob did when he departed and blessed all his sons.

But this was to be done in a covert, secret way. Isaac was afraid of the objection that might be raised by his wife, afraid of the very valid objection that she would have raised that God had said the elder should serve the younger, and therefore, he thinks of this, good, easy man as he is—he thinks of a simple way of getting out of the matter—so he will have Esau there and give Esau the blessing. He had no confidence, you see, in his wife—did not tell her what he was going to do. And it is generally a bad thing that a man is going to do when he does not tell his wife of it.

Then, meanwhile, the wife has not confidence in her husband. She hears this little speech between her husband and her son—she was eavesdropping, I suppose, always fearful that something of that kind might be done—and so without saying to her husband “You are in this about to do contrary to the will of God,” as she might have done with much gentleness—and Isaac, who was of a gentle spirit, a holy spirit, would have been quite prepared to hear it.

She did not want to do that, but she thought, “You plot, so I will plot—and I will try to mar your plot. You are about to see Esau alone—I will see if I cannot circumvent you.” Then she goes to Jacob, and Jacob shows a want of confidence in his father. He is willing to get the blessing out of his father by deceit, instead of going, as a manly son should, to his father and saying, “My Father, albeit I am not the first-born, yet you will remember God rules in this household and He has said, ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’ Evidently the blessing is mine and besides that, I have bought of my brother (however hard the bargain), I have bought the birthright and you have no right to give it to him.” He might have said something at any rate—much or little.

But instead of that, there is no representation made between them—they are all three, each one on his own account, plotting this and plotting that. Now I believe there is never that in a family but what there is sure to be mischief come of it. It is an excellent rule—though I may be comparatively a young person—I venture to say—a rule which all who try will find very advantageous to holiness as well as to their peace, to take care and keep everything clear and above board, and when any little difficulty

comes, to try to remove it at once, and when another difficulty comes, to move that away, too. Otherwise one difficulty will tell upon another, and little things kept back will go on multiplying and increasing till, perhaps, even Christian people will fall together by the ears one with another.

You must not tell me that it is a slight thing for a husband to fall out with his wife, or for a Christian household to be at sixes and sevens. I tell you it is a thing which makes angels weep, makes devils rejoice, makes the world say, “Is this your Christianity?” We must have united, happy Christian households, and that we cannot have if we conduct our affairs with a want of confidence in the one and the other.

“In preaching the Gospel,” says one, “you shouldn’t talk about this. Mind your business, my friend.” It is just such talk as Christ would speak if He were here. He often spoke such practical things as these. His teaching was, in fact, of all the household and of the common everyday concerns—and so shall ours be if, perhaps, we may prevent some evil which otherwise may be a serious damage to the church of God.

Now the next sin in their case was a *want of confidence in God* all round—all three alike—for I can hardly distinguish between the one and the other. Here is Isaac—he knows God’s purpose, but he does not see how God will fulfill it. There is Rebekah—she knows the purpose better still, but somehow or other she thinks God’s purpose won’t be fulfilled. She says, “Jacob, you are about to lose the blessing, yet God has said you shall have it. The decree will fail. You cannot believe that God will carry it out. Only tomorrow morning and Esau will get the blessing. I heard Isaac say he would give it to him.”

Now she is so afraid that God would not effect His own purpose that she steps in to help the Lord. And what can any man or any woman do to help the Lord? If the Omnipotent and Eternal God cannot fulfill His own purposes, I am sure Rebekah cannot. But she thinks she can. She does not have confidence in God.

And there is Jacob—well, the blessing is for him and he prizes it above everything. It could not come to him by the rule of the flesh, but it is to come to him by the election of grace, and he cannot sit down and let the Lord work His own purposes. “Be still and see the salvation of God” is a text that neither of them could understand, or if they could understand it, they could not put it in practice.

Isaac is anxious to give the blessing. Rebekah is anxious. Jacob is anxious to get it for himself. And so all round they did not lean on God at all. They desire to do His will, but they do not trust Him to fulfill His own purposes. And what a sad thing this is in a household, and what a sad thing it is in an individual household when we cannot trust the Lord.

Unbelief is a very prolific sin. Once we doubt the Lord, I know not what we may do next, and next, and next. It is a sharp turning out of the right road, that turning to trust in ourselves rather than in the Most High. It won’t do, my brethren. It won’t do. We walk rightly when we walk trustfully, when we leave our concerns in the hand of the Lord. But when we will carry our own burdens, we shall soon be in mischief. He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers. He that runs before the cloud of God’s providence may have, ere long, to come back again faster than he went forward.

There was another matter, and that was a *want of confidence in right doing*. Isaac ought to have had confidence and to have given the blessing to Jacob. He knew it was for Jacob, but he was in all probability afraid of Esau, so he would not venture to bring upon himself Esau’s wrath. He will give the blessing to him, contrary to God’s purpose.

Rebekah cannot leave the matter with God and be truthful—she must concoct a scheme. Jacob cannot trust in doing right—he must make lies and do wrong to make things go right, and on the whole he thinks that because God’s purpose runs that way, he may take some license to lie as he will.

Oh! dear brethren and sisters, let us always have faith that, as a straight line is the nearest distance between two places, the most efficient way to prosper, after all, is to do the right—and the shortcut and the right cut is integrity, and uprightness, and truthfulness. If we begin to tack about this way and that, we shall have to our sorrow to tack again—only the longer we run we shall have to sail a great deal further and scarcely reach our haven at all, if we once begin that process.

Some have been foolish enough to infer that their duty is to be judged of by divine purposes or providences. This shows, again, a want of faith in doing right. If they believed in doing what was a right thing, they would know that God would see those purposes were fulfilled. There is much mischief done in believing that we are to follow the promises of Scripture apart from the law of God.

There was a man who once had no wood in his house—and it came into his mind that his neighbor had a large woodstack, and he thought, “All things are yours.” Says he, “I’ll go and take some wood. ‘All things are yours’—why should not I have some wood off my neighbor’s stack?” But just as he was going to take a log of wood, this came into his mind, “Thou shalt not steal,” and he very wisely preferred the latter to the former.

And there have been some who have said, “Such a text came into my mind.” Never mind, you stick to God’s law. It can never be right, text or no text, for a man to tell a lie. There are some things that cannot be altered and God never does alter. He bids you keep to His statutes. You keep to them. “But perhaps, that might involve a great deal of suffering to myself.” “He that cannot take up his cross and follow Christ is not worthy of Him.” And this is a part of the cross—to be willing to suffer for well-doing.

“But I may bring suffering upon other people, and might lose many opportunities of usefulness if I were to act exactly as my conscience should teach me.” My dear friend, what have you to do with usefulness? After all, your serving God is your first business, whether you shall be useful or not. God will see to that. You are to seek usefulness, but never usefulness by *sinning*—for that is the old doctrine of, “Let us do evil that good may come,” and the notion, the old Jesuitical notion, that the end justifies the means, which can never be right.

Do right if heaven itself should grieve. If the skies should not be propped except by a lie, let them fall. Come what may, you never must in any degree or in any shape depart from the honest, the true, the right, the Christ-like, that which God commands, that which alone God will approve.

“Well,” says one, “but suppose now Rebekah had not thus deceived Isaac and got the blessing for Jacob, what might have happened?” Ah! that is one of the things I don’t know, and that is one of the things none of us can guess, but I can as readily suppose what might have happened to set it right, as you can, or will dare, suppose what would have happened to set it wrong.

I can suppose that long before Esau brought in the savory meat, there might have come to Isaac’s mind the recollection of the divine Word, and he might have felt he was about to do wrong, and might have said to Esau, “I cannot do it. I am convinced, after all, that I have been guided by the flesh, and not by the spirit. I must give the blessing to your brother Jacob.”

I do not see why that could not have happened. I think it very probably might. Certain I am that the divine purpose would have been fulfilled somehow or other—*somehow or other*—and it was not Rebekah’s business, nor yet Jacob’s business to attend to God’s purposes. Their duty was to do the right thing and let things take their course.

Now think a minute about the sin of each one of these persons. There was Isaac. Isaac, a true believer, a man who lived near to God, one of whom we know that he was given to meditation. He was often in the field at eventide to commune with God—a man of a quiet, gentle spirit. When the Philistines quarreled with him, he just went out of their way. If they took one way, he took another. If they took that, he took another, and so on—a man of a very gentle mold.

This was a virtue, but it led him into a fault. He was like some persons who are too gentle to say, “No.” Too gentle to encounter opposition. Perhaps this was why he resolved to give the blessing to Esau, lest he should have a quarrel and bring down the wrath of Esau upon his head—and he thought he would do it so slyly that nobody would know it, and so he would avoid all sort of tempest and trouble in the family.

My brethren, there is such a thing as allowing your gentleness to lead you into wrong. Firmness is wanted in every question, and firmness especially where God’s will is concerned. Isaac was in a great haste to transmit the blessing. He expected to see his seed. Now Esau was married, but Jacob was not.

The father, perhaps, for that reason thought that the seed must, after all, therefore run on in the line of Esau, and not in that of Jacob, so he could not wait the Lord's time—could not tarry for the Lord to give the blessing, but he said, "My eyes are dim. I am getting old"—not remembering that he might have fifty or sixty more years to live—even in his advanced old age.

So he hurried to do what would have been right to do when God made him, but wrong to do when his own will made him. Ah! good men, and experienced men, too—you may be in a great haste through unbelief, and you may have to rue the day in which you were in such a hurry.

Then Isaac sinned in that he was forgetful of the mind of God. If God had said, "The elder shall serve the younger," it was not for Isaac to judge of the rightness of that. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He quarreled a little with the doctrine of election—could not quite see it—wanted, after all, that it should be of the will of man, of the flesh, and not altogether of the will of God.

He liked Esau—who would not? A fine fellow, a man given to athletic exercises. And men of gentle mold always admire the opposite in their sons. They like to see the manliness developed in them. So Esau became his favorite, while Jacob, quiet in spirit, and one who loved holy things, should have been—if there had been any difference—*should have been*, at any rate, more dear to him. And so, running counter to the mind of God, the old man thought of this cunning device of giving the blessing in secret. There was Isaac's sin.

Now look at Rebekah's sin. She was a true believer too. Think not hardly of her, and yet excuse not her fault. She looked upon the blessing which went with the line of Abraham as being invaluable and precious. She desired that Jacob should have it. She knew, moreover, that Jacob must have it, for God had declared that so it should be. She was mindful of the divine words and deserved honor that she had that laid up in her heart.

She was anxious, however, to prevent that word from being thwarted. There was her weak point. She could not leave God to fulfill His own decree, but so anxious was she about it that she determined that her own son, her dear son, should get the blessing—and she was willing to sacrifice herself and all that she had for it.

I like to see in a mother a willingness to lose anything if but her son should be saved, and something of that is in Rebekah, though put in a wrong place, when she said, "Upon me be thy curse, my son." If he will but seek after the blessing, she bids him seek after, and if there was any loss involved in it she is quite prepared to bear it. Her fault was that she came of a cunning family. We should call her a shrewd woman—a true mother of the Jews, as Jacob is the father. Their sin seems to have been stamped in them by their progenitors, and she used that, as she thought, in order to prevent the purpose of God being frustrated, and her favorite son being deprived of the blessing.

Then, as for Jacob, he was a fine man in some respects, but he had too much shrewdness, too much business tact, I think they call it now-a-days. (Is not that what they call it now-a-days?) Or too much prudence?—That is another fine expression for a very spurious thing. He was anxious for the blessing. He was a valuer of spiritual things—he would not lose the spiritual blessing, whatever might happen, and he would do anything in order to obtain the spiritual blessing, for he set a value upon it. Yet with all that, Jacob was too eager and became untrue in his eagerness to get spiritual things.

You see their faults then. I have set them before you, and with nothing to extenuate them. Dear brethren and sisters, let us learn a lesson from these failings and pray God that we may be preserved from them.

Now you notice in the second place—

II. HOW THEY ARE RECOVERED FROM THIS SIN.

I will call it their repentance. Now look at Isaac. As soon as Isaac perceives that he has been wrong in wishing to bless Esau, he does not persist in it. He will give Esau such a blessing as he may, but he does not think for a moment of retracting what he has done—he feels that the hand of God was in it. What is more, he tells his son, "He is blessed, yea, and shall be blessed."

And a second time he calls Jacob to himself and in a solemn manner pronounces over again the blessing giving to him outright what at first he had gotten by subtlety. Here you see Isaac rising somewhat to a hero. He was timid and subtle, but now he has become bold and let what consequences will follow, he will carry out what he knows to be the mind of God. The good old man, though he makes no confession of the fault here, doubtless did confess it before his God, and stuck firmly to the right.

As to Rebekah, she saw the mischief that she had caused, and did the best thing she could. She gave up her son and sent him away. Little do we know how much she loved him. Those Eastern mothers have a remarkable, a more than ordinary fondness for the favorite son. Yet she would give him up, she would make a sacrifice of him for the blessing's sake, that he may live and the blessing be continued in him.

As for Jacob, from that very day he begins to develop—he becomes a pilgrim and a stranger, puts himself under the protection of God, and the manhood of Jacob seems from that day to have been aroused in him, aroused, perhaps, by a sense of the fault he had committed. Altogether, the three persons, though the worse for their sin, were so led to repentance that they became afterwards better men and a better woman in future life.

But now I have to remind you of—

III. THE AFFLICTIONS WHICH THEY BROUGHT UPON THEMSELVES.

There are families that have been very happy up to a point, and from that point something wrong was done and from that hour all happiness vanished. A whole family has been scattered, perhaps, or, if united, yet still they are subject to great adversity.

Now in this case Isaac had wanted to see very soon the blessing continued. He did not see it. Jacob must be sent away—right away. He has the blessing, but he must go. Isaac lived to see him again in extreme old age—he lived to see his son come back, but there were some forty years, perhaps, during which he was away. The son at home would be small comfort to him—and the son whom he had blessed must be taken away from him for a time.

As to Rebekah, she never saw her son again. She bade him farewell with many a tear, and when he returned, Rebekah was gone to her rest. She did not know what she was doing for herself. As far as she was concerned, she was forever separating herself and her son in this world.

As for Jacob, he for whose good the whole was done—from that moment he had such a chapter of sorrows as made him say when he had gone through it, “Few and evil are the days of thy servant.” All through his life that one transgression cast a gloom over it all. The right part of it, the desire to get the blessing adhered to him—he never lost it—but the wrong part of it came on, came on very soon.

God generally pays His people back in their own coin. If we sin against Him, somebody very soon sins against us—in the same way, too. Observe, he cheats his brother—then Laban cheats him. From the moment he enters Laban's family, it is first one cheat and then another. Laban tries to outdo Jacob, and Jacob tries to outdo Laban—a long, long tale of shrewdness and sharpness.

If you choose to go on your own tack, you may. If you elect to be your own manager, you shall manage and you shall see what comes of it. Jacob found what came of it through his having to go to Laban in that way. He became the husband of two wives and he brought into his family a perpetual element of discord and alienation.

When they brought him that coat which had been dipped in blood, and said, “Know whether this is thy son's coat or not?”—when his sons deceived him, do not you think he must have recollected that coat that he had put on to deceive his father? When he went down into Egypt, must there not have been some bitter thoughts? “Perhaps I had never been here, if that turn in my life had not led me to the marriage of Laban's daughters, and thus brought quarrel into the house, causing Joseph's coming down here, and my coming down.” We cannot tell, but certainly it seems from that moment to have been true, “Thorns, also, and thistles, shall thy life bring forth to thee.”

You have often noticed his craftiness and said, “How wrong it was.” Notice the chastisement that followed. If he had not been a man of God, the thing might have answered, perhaps, but as a man of God

he must be chastened for it. “You only have I known,” said God, “of all people of the earth; I will punish you for your iniquities.”

There is no punishment for the believer in the world to come, but in this world there are chastisements that will surely follow upon every sin. “As many as I love will I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” And especially in family sin—family troubles will come up with a terrible harvest if we once fall—perhaps it might be but once—into some family transgression.

Fathers, people of God, take pains to rule your households in the fear of the Lord. Mothers, pray for grace that in your families you may never lead any one of your sons or daughters in a wrong path. Sons, ask for grace that you may have the blessing, and if you be godly sons, deal wisely with your ungodly brothers, never letting them have to say that you were harsh, or overbearing, or unjust to them as Esau could truthfully say of his brother Jacob, but the rather be more tender to them, give up more to them, be with them more kind than you would have been if they had been Christians, if by any means you might yet win them over, and they might be brought to know the Savior.

Oh! for a family in which there is constant prayer—a family in which every child may safely follow the father’s example—a family in which the parent’s life shall always encourage the child to follow their example. Oh! for God-fearing households! They are the strength of the church. They are the glory of the nation. God loves the tents of Jacob well, and there will He command a blessing, even life forevermore, where brethren dwell together in holy unity.

Now as for Esau (one final word about him)—

IV. THE UNGODLY SON WHO MISSED THE BLESSING.

He was a profane person in character, a derider of holy things altogether. Care about them? Not he. His blind father’s God? not a bit cared he for Him, nor any of those covenant blessing that were to come! Let him live by his sword and by his bow—let him be a fine gentleman among the Hittites and among the Philistines, and that will quite satisfy him.

Now there are many—many of that sort. But it will be said, “How is it written that Esau would have inherited the blessing but that he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears?” So will you be—so will you be if you go to work on Esau’s plan. Esau wanted to have this world and the next, too. He wanted to have the pottage and the birthright. He wanted to be a fine gentleman among the Hittites, and yet have the blessing. He wanted to have his wife of a fine noble Philistine family and be thought a famous fellow among them—and yet at the same time have the blessing that belonged to the separate people of God, and with tears he sought to get that blessing, but he could not have it.

And so may you. You may say, “Oh! that I might be saved. Oh! that I might have the privileges of a Christian.” You cannot have the privileges of a Christian unless you have the separated life of a Christian—unless you are willing to give up this world for the separated life of Christ—unless you will, with Isaac, feel that your possession is Canaan and walk by faith, and not by sight. If you do like Esau, you cannot have it hereafter.

It is like John Bunyan’s parable, Passion and Patience. Passion would have his best things first. Patience would have his best things last. Passion had all his best things and laughed at Patience as Patience sat there, but after a while Passion had used up all his best things, and then he had nothing left. But Patience had his best things last, and then he came in for his turn, and as John Bunyan says, “There is nothing after the last, so the good things of Patience lasted forever and ever.” So the good things of Jacob, when he chose the good part and sought after it—and with all his sin he did do that—it lasted and his name is in the covenant, and he rejoices at this day before the throne of God.

But Esau did not care for the spiritual, at least not enough to let go of the carnal. He only looked to have that if he could have the other too, and as he could not have that and the other, he preferred to let the spiritual blessing go, and though he cried about it and mourned about it, yet he could not go to the point of giving up the world for the sake of the world to come.

And I know some people—I think I know some old people, too, who would like to be Christians, but they like their wine cups. They would like to be saved, but they like worldly amusements. They would

like, in fact, to run with the hare and the hounds, too. They would like to serve the devil, or breakfast with the devil and sup with Christ. They would like to have in this world all the joys and the pleasures which belong to downright worldliness, and then they would like to have the pleasures of Christ as well at the last day. It cannot be. If they seek it carefully with tears, it cannot be. If you have chosen the world, have the world—if you choose Christ, you must count the riches of Egypt to be as nothing for the sake of His reproach.

May God bless these words and lead us all to faith in Jesus Christ, to a desire for the best things, and may He prevent our walking in the unbecoming way in which these three good people did. If we have so walked, may He lead us to repent, and help us to mend our manners, and save us, above all things, from being profane persons, as was Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GENESIS 27:1-29

Verses 1-4. *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.*

A sad misfortune to lose the sight of the eyes! How greatly, how much more than we do, ought we to thank God for the prolongation of our sight, and it has been well remarked by one of our greatest men of science “that we seldom hear Christians thank God as they should for the use of spectacles in these modern times.”

A philosopher has written a long paper concerning the blessings which he found in old age from this invention, and we, enabled still to read the Word when our sight decays, should be exceedingly grateful for it. After all, with all alleviations, it is a very great trial to be deprived of one’s eyesight, but those who are in good company. Whilst they have some of the greatest divines in modern history, they have here one of the best of men—one of the patriarchs whose eyes were so dim that he could not see. He seems to have had some sort of mistiness of soul about this time which was far worse, and so he desired to give the blessing to Esau, whom God had determined should never have it.

5-11. *And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:*

He does not appear to have raised any objection to what she proposed on moral grounds, but only on the ground of the difficulty of it and the likelihood of being discovered. It only shows how low the moral sense may be in some who, nevertheless, have a desire towards God and have a faith in Him. In those darker days we can hardly expect to find so much of the excellences of the spirit as we ought to find nowadays in those who possess the Spirit of God fully.

12-15. *My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:*

And Esau, altogether a man of the world, one very like the sons of other families around about, took care to adorn himself in goodly raiment. It seems always more becoming to the worldling than the Christian. Esau had a suit good enough for this occasion, but Jacob had not. I would that those who fear God were less careful about the adornments of their persons. There are far better ornaments than gold can buy—ornaments neat and raiment comely—may we all possess them.

16-19. *And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn;*

Which, whatever may be said about it, was a plain lie, and is not to be excused upon any theory whatever. It was as much a sin in Jacob as it would be in us, except that perhaps he had less light, and the general cunning of those who surrounded him may have made it more easy with him and a less tax on conscience for him to do this than it would be in our case.

“I am Esau,” said he. Why is all this recorded in the Bible? It is not to the credit of these men. No! the Holy Spirit does not write for the credit of man—He writes for the glory of God’s grace. He writes for the warning of believers now, and these things are examples unto us that we may avoid the blots and flaws in good men and may thereby become more what we should be.

19-20. *I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.*

Here he draws God’s name into this lie, and this is worse still.

21-29. *And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.*

So he tied his own hands—he could not revoke his blessing, or had he done so, he would have brought the curse upon himself.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.